



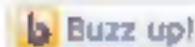
POP CANDY

Unwrapping pop culture's hip and hidden treasures

By [Whitney Matheson](#)

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The magical return of Rock-afire robots



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If you grew up near a Showbiz Pizza Place in the '80s, there's a good chance you remember the "house band," a group of robot rockers called the [Rock-afire Explosion](#). Pop reader Lora told me about [this guy](#) in Chicago who is trying to reassemble the animatronic band in his garage.

"Since first purchasing Rolfe deWolfe, a ventriloquist wolf robot who provided comic relief by speaking through a bird puppet named Earl Schmerle, in 1998, (Michael) Garay's collection has turned from hobby into full-on obsession," *Time Out Chicago* reports. "Ten years later, Garay owns approximately 20 android accompanists, all in different stages of completion, and estimates he's sunk \$25,000 into what was supposed to be a one-time purchase."

Michael isn't the only Rock-afire fan out there. People like him exist all over the country, and there are [fansites](#), conventions and YouTube videos to prove it. It's kind of weird to see clips like [this one](#), which show Rock-afire reprogrammed to perform an **Evanescence** song. Apparently, [a few](#) pizza parlors still have the working band as well.

"One of my favorite childhood memories was going to Showbiz with my family on special occasions – birthdays, straight A's, one very odd Mother's Day," Lora says. Long live robot rock 'n' roll!

THE MAGICAL RETURN OF ROCK-AFIRE ROBOTS

(USA Today Pop Candy - May, 2008)

Date of Origin: 2008
Archived: 5-24-08
Submission by Menutia
Version 1.0

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